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Implementation: Making hard work of something simple

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Implementation: Making hard work of something simple*

* This research is based on the authors' deep involvement in the process reported here, and backed by a large file of emails documenting each step (as well as the disputes). The narrative below would suffer if each individual item were referenced.

Abstract

Early in 2012 the Rural Property Addressing Project in South Australia announced that it had substantially met its outcomes, and that the whole of the project was soon to be completed.

In 2003, one of the recommendations to Cabinet from the South Australian Premier's Bushfire Summit was to endorse the development of a standard property addressing system for rural properties across the State. This was formally endorsed by Cabinet, and was a direct response to the fact that essential services such as ambulance, medical and social care were hindered in providing services to the residents of Eyre Peninsula during and after the bushfires.

Overall, this was not a controversial decision, nor was it a huge implementation challenge, yet it took 9 years to come into effect. This is a classic case of the tyranny of small decisions.

This paper outlines some of the implementation challenges faced by this apparently simple project, and provides some thoughts for implementation challenges of the future. The take away message is that if something so comparatively simple was made so complex, how can we adapt our public services to the cross cutting challenges of the future.

Introduction

Successful policy involves good and workable ideas that are well implemented. There is a large body of literature on implementation failure. There are also good guides to stringing together the components of successful implementation. This paper outlines a situation that falls between success and failure.

Here we analyse a policy objective approved by a state Premier and endorsed by the Cabinet, which then went into implementation limbo. The task was to give all rural properties in South Australia a recognisable address. There was widespread support of, and no opposition to the proposed outcome. Yet what should have been a smooth and quick task took nine years from announcement in 2003 to final operation in 2012.

The academic literature contains extensive material on implementation. (see for example, (Althaus, Bridgman, and Davis 2007: Chap 10; Eppel, Turner, and Wolf 2011; Pal 1997; Peckover, Hall, and White 2009; Scott and Baehler 2010) . The Australian National Audit office recently prepared an excellent handbook on quality implementation, including a best practice guide (Australian National Audit Office 2006). Many years ago one of the authors (Graycar 1979) developed a policy implementation model that had three components, - task assessment, process, and organisation. The model also outlined four sets of constraints, conflict and consensus, co-ordination and co-operation, scope, and time. This is an opportunity to see if the model has stood the test of time. In developing the model he referred to Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) who pointed out that the study of implementation requires understanding that apparently simple sequences of events depend on complex chains of reciprocal interactions and that each part of the chain must be built with others in view. In other words, the separation of policy design from implementation is fatal.

One body of implementation theory focuses on the contestability of policy and the barriers and hurdles that need to be overcome in implementation matters that are passionately debated (Brook and King 2011; Hood 1976; Le Grand 2006) . Another focuses on the management skills and organisational prescriptions to make things happen. Some of the literature is old, but still pertinent (EITI 2012; Etzioni 1971;

Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Van Meter and Van Horn 1975), but see also (Friedman 2008; Hood 1976; Pal 1997; Young 2008).

This paper focuses on contested ownership, not of ideas or the outcome, but of the process. It highlights the role of a central agency and it also makes some observations on agency co-ordination and collaboration. While the rhetoric of joining up government focuses on the obvious advantages of horizontal governance, the reality is that vertical silos dominate when resources are to be expended and benefit shared. O'Flynn (2009) writes perceptively about the cult of collaboration and tells us it is not a new concept, but that we should tease out what might be achieved through co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration. Shergold (2008) gives examples of connecting government. Lundin (2007) however argues that complex policies are more effectively put into practice if agencies cooperate a lot, whereas less difficult tasks are handled just as well without inter organisational cooperation.

There is much debate on the advantages and disadvantages of joined up government. Hood (2005: 19) argues that the term "Joined-up Government" (JUG) is simply another word for "coordination". He suggests that the Blair Government coined the phrase in the 1990s to make an "old administrative doctrine" (ie: "coordination") sound new. Hood goes on to argue that what is old is the idea that coordination is important for effective government as is the idea that departmentalism – "vertical silos" tend to act in self-interest, defending institutional turf (Hood 2005: 22). In other words, for Hood the Blair government attempted to prove that JUG was the answer to bureaucratic failure. However, it could be argued that the notion of JUG is more sophisticated than "coordination" in that it implies shared funding arrangements by departments or specific projects being funded rather than specific agencies.

This takes us to the notion of implementation units. If there was a dedicated implementation unit, would the Premier's (uncontested) wishes about rural addressing have been implemented more smoothly and more quickly? The evidence in Australia (Tiernan 2006; Wanna 2006) shows that an implementation unit would not have facilitated the process described in this article.

What is argued here is that a “policy champion” is an important part of any implementation process. Even if there is a consensus about the big picture, there can be contest about resources and small details. Even if there is political backing there needs to be a champion to keep the process on track and circumvent obstacles that are purposely constructed, or that just pop up.

The policy and the task

In the light of national attempts to develop a consistent addressing system for all properties, it was estimated in 2003 that approximately 50,000 rural properties in South Australia did not have a recognisable address.

The application of a formal addressing system was seen as particularly important, not only in emergency services but in other process areas. In emergency services it was no longer feasible to tell the ambulance or fire call centre, to turn left at the second shed, then keep going past the big half dead tree till you cross the dried up creek. This might have made sense if the call was to a local service, but if the call centre operator was in the city, another state, or another country, something more precise was needed.

Emergency services was not the only potential user of a rural property addressing system. The National Street Addressing Standard AS/NZS 4819:2003 was launched in September 2003 by Standards Australia. The Standard was to be implemented in all States of Australia as well as New Zealand. A nationally recognised located address for occupied properties in line with the National Standard was considered fundamental to efficient and effective location and identification for various services including:-

- Ambulance and emergency services response – particularly during bushfire season.

- Collection of statistics affecting government planning – grants, infrastructure decisions, health, social planning, agricultural planning, resources (eg. water).
- ABS data collection.
- Efficiency of electronic government business and services to locations.
- Efficiency of location based business service delivery (eg taxi, medical home visits, mail, phone, utilities - water, gas home connections etc.).
- Electoral rolls, the SA State Strategic Plan and government performance statistics.
- Personal navigation (eg. GPS car navigation, mobile and web).

The benefits of a standardised rural property addressing scheme were outlined as

- Improved emergency response saving lives and property
- Improved social planning for regional services and schools, hospitals etc
- Improved economic sustainability through rural business planning
- Improved natural resource monitoring and planning eg water monitoring
- Improved local government services eg rural road naming
- Improved rural statistics

Shortly after the South Australian Premier's Bushfire Summit (2003), a key line agency was asked to lead investigations and convene a Steering Group comprising state and local government representatives to consider the adoption and implementation of a standard rural addressing system. In addition to the endorsement by the Premier in 2003, the Emergency Management Committee Meeting held in August 2005 (Chaired by the Commissioner for Police) and the Emergency Management Council Meeting held in September 2005 (chaired by the Premier), agreed to adopt the Rural Property Addressing Standard as defined in the National Street Addressing Standard. The project had endorsement at the highest levels and clearly had to be implemented.

A chart, consistent with the State Strategic Plan was drawn up and this listed the SA Government Agencies that would benefit in areas such as rural safety, improved rural

economics, improved sustainability through better natural resource management, improved social planning and improved council services.

With the Premier's endorsement one would expect work-up from recommendation to formal project proposal stage within a few months. But this was not the case.

Rather like an episode of "Yes Minister", there were inherent contradictions and tensions on a range of matters, which became the subject of protracted debate between departments. For example, which department should assume leadership or sponsorship for the project and who was going to pay for it? Even though the Treasurer had announced that due to budget constraints, all new projects had to be funded from within existing budgets, some departments felt it appropriate to approach Cabinet for new funding, while other departments considered this would be a poor look for all concerned and argued that funding should be shared equally between all departments which stood to benefit from implementation of the new rural addressing system.

Hence, negotiations between the parties broke down and in 2006, the matter was referred to the Premier's Department to be resolved. Although there was overwhelming agreement on the policy, implementation could not begin as there was no agreement on ownership or on funding.

Implementation

This was not a complex implementation task. As stated there was agreement on the final outcome. It was not controversial. In terms of Graycar's earlier model (1979) the model's constraints were not a barrier: there was huge consensus and virtually no conflict, scope was agreed upon, time did not seem an issue, and the only area that needed attention was co-ordination and co-operation.

In the case of the Rural Property Addressing Project several agencies stood to gain from its implementation, but as mentioned earlier/above there was no clear ownership. Furthermore, all the line agencies involved were severely financially constrained, and saw the project as a whole of government exercise. The dollars were not large - the project was estimated to cost \$1.7 million dollars over four years.

The old adage, it seems, that when in doubt, take the issue for resolution to a central agency which will drive through the necessary implementation strategies. There were two issues however, that were not widely appreciated. First, notwithstanding the Premier's endorsement, the central agency did not have the budget to take over the project. Second, the central agency did not have track record in any of the issues relating to this project - but it did have ingenuity.

An exemplary implementation plan was drawn up for the project. It could have served as a model in a university course on implementation. It outlined objectives, challenges and risks, governance, procurement, stakeholder management, and concluded with a wonderful communication strategy.

The objective was stated simply as " the implementation of national standard rural addressing in line with AS/NZS 4819:2003 including systems implementation and allocation of addresses for occupied rural properties in South Australia". This would achieve the project's aims to deliver a rural property addressing system across the state that will improve rural safety in emergencies, improve efficiency of government business and improve general property service efficiency. The rural address will provide rural residents of SA nationally recognised information for identifying and locating their property.

The main state government stakeholders were identified

- Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)
- Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure (DTEI)
- Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH)
- Department of Justice (Justice)
- Department of Health (Health)

- Department of Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA)
- Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC)
- Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)
- Department of Families and Communities (DFCS)
- South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM)

(Some of these have changed their names, and some might not seem obvious – for example the Department of Justice contained emergency services - other than ambulance, The Primary Industries Department contained both the Office of Local Government and the State Planning Authority.)

In addition Local Government was a key stakeholder in that it would be responsible for councils naming and signing rural roads; rural residents displaying their roadside property address number; rural address updates recorded into the central address register. National agencies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australia Post also had a keen interest.

In the implementation plan tasks were allocated to the major players. State government would lead and coordinate implementation of rural addressing with Councils and external stakeholders; establish the initial rural address for the estimated 50,000 rural addresses; establish the rural address register, rural road register and maintenance systems.

Local Government through the SA Regional Organisation of Councils (SAROC) agreed that it would provide road naming; provide appropriate road name sign posting to roads; undertake a representative audit of property addressing information; and provide general promotion through newsletters etc

A governance structure was devised with a Board of Management to set and ensure sound strategic and financial outcomes. This Board would be chaired by a senior official from the Premier's Department and would include key stakeholders including the Surveyor General, principal users, and Local Government. A communication plan, a proposed IT support plan and a funding plan were included.

The Board of Management would meet quarterly to review progress of implementation with an annual report to the lead Minister, the Minister for Emergency Services, and delegated accountability for day to day State Government deliverables would remain assigned to the Project Manager. The Project Manager would report to the Board of Management and provide quarterly reports.

It is to be remembered that this was about assigning street addresses to 50,000 properties. This was not an implementation plan to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons or eliminate world poverty. It was not even on the scale of ensuring that no child would live in poverty in a decade's time, or making water flow through a river system where the claims of agriculture, industry, environment and domestic usage interests clashed, nor something that would fix the future of manufacturing industry, or balance the interests of coal seam gas explorers and local farmers. It was about naming some rural roads and giving the properties on these roads house numbers.

The implementation work could not get started because two bits of the jigsaw puzzle were not in place – funding and ownership.

The challenges to implementation lay not with external stakeholders, all of whom were supportive, but within state government.

Fixing the money

The budget that was drawn up estimated the implementation cost as \$1.7 million over four years, though a fund of \$2m was sought to cover contingencies and unexpected events.

There were no additional funds for the project, and the steering committee chair (Head of the Cabinet Office in the Department of Premier and Cabinet) had to stress on several occasions that preparing a Cabinet submission to seek new funds was not an appropriate move. He went through several meetings suggesting various cost sharing arrangements. The simplest proposal was that each of the 10 agencies contribute \$50,000 per annum for four years, though for some this seemed like a formidable

hurdle. The best agreement that could be reached was that nine of the agencies would commit \$50,000, and the tenth would provide the project officer. However, the tenth felt hard done by as the project officer would cost more than \$50,000 as well as consume additional resources (office space, phone, computer etc)

Before long, this started to unravel. One of the agencies that had promised cash said it would prefer now to deliver in kind, but they had nothing in kind that would assist the project. They thought the Chair was asking too much when he specified the in-kind contribution to be a person able to understand spatial data, develop statistics from complex data sets, work on database development, be able to relate well to both IT and data users and understand their needs and work well in a team

Another agency just pulled out completely, saying they no longer had the resources. This agency would be a significant user of rural property addressing. The Health Department with the largest budget in the state started to bargain, offering \$30,000 in the first year and then three payments of \$20,000 per year. Another agency head wrote asking if the budget could be set at \$1.7m and there be no commitments to the contingency fund of \$300,000. This was rejected as too risky, however guarantees were given that funds would be returned if they were not all spent.

After some months of negotiation the funding was loosely, rather than firmly agreed upon, and the steering committee chair decided to commence it as there was enough for the first year. He decided to take the risk that it would be able to continue especially if it had already been commenced, and an end point was in sight.

Having agreed to get going, the money had to be collected. The first step was to have agreement from each Chief Executive (Department Head) that they would commit to the project, and then for DPC to send invoices. A senior Treasury official advised that this would be looked upon by the Treasurer as poor practice.

His advice was that although the state government spend for this project is small and doesn't require special cabinet approval, the Treasurer should be aware of the spend and approve it. That way the project would be an approved government project and any adjustments to agency budgets could be made simply by Treasury. His advice is

that the Treasurer would require a minute from the lead Minister convincing him that there was agreement to this project (CEs involved were informed) and funds should be transferred.

The steering committee head (DPC) was told that if agencies send DPC their money, DPC has no expenditure authority to pass it on or spend it. Treasury's advice was for the lead Minister to send an information note to Cabinet outlining the agreement that has been reached between agencies, identifying the lead agency to whom funds will be transferred, and by whom the work will be undertaken. That Minister could then write to the Treasurer seeking expenditure authority transfer so that they can use the funds once received. One complication was that several agencies were keen to commence their contributions before the end of the financial year, and it was recommended that the lead agency should seek the carryover of these funds as well at the same time even though they might not know the exact quantum of the proposed carryover.

Passing the hat around might have seemed a simple process, but it got caught up in layer upon layer of accountability, and all of this in the absence of a lead Minister.

Ownership/ Leadership

The project had no obvious leader. To make this a whole of government exercise, one of the authors, the senior official who headed up the Cabinet Office took leadership, so that he could work directly with departmental heads, call meetings of appropriate people, negotiate any disagreements, and speak directly with the Premier if necessary. To the dismay of many participants he had no magic cave of funds to draw upon for this project. Nor did he consider it expedient to complain to the Premier that something so apparently simple was not working smoothly. There were bigger issues to discuss during their meetings.

Leadership, however did not translate into ownership, and this is one of the salutary lessons from this exercise.

Most of the technical work was done in the office of the Surveyor General by a specially seconded project officer. The project officer came from the Primary Industries Department, and he was a person with a great deal of technical expertise relating to the project. This officer was on secondment, and as the project was starting to move forward in May/ June 2007, all were keenly aware that his period of secondment concluded on June 30, and no funds had been allocated for his continuation. This involved a flurry of emails, negotiations with senior officials from his department (including the CE) and fast tracking with the human resources people, who saw this process of extension as somewhat irregular. Having the personnel in place, and reliably so, is a key issue in implementation.

So too is the setting of project milestones. Several departmental heads wanted a good result for the project, and there was a bit of tension as to which objectives would get primacy.

It was crucial that the issue of the lead agency be resolved. However, negotiations between the Chief Executives of the three key departments broke down. Each had a rational and valid argument as to why their respective departments should not take the lead role. For reasons of confidentiality the three key departments will be referred to as Departments A, B and C

An agreement in principle had been reached with the Head of Department A, who was prepared to commit his department to manage funding arrangements and to lead the project on the basis that DPC transfer an executive to his department to oversee implementation of the project. This was initially agreed, but did not happen as that executive left the SA Public Service. There was no other executive available to take on the role and thus the Chief Executive of Department A considered it too high a risk to now have his department act as the lead agency. He was concerned that there were major risks to be managed, such as the relationship between State and Local Government, which would require special attention.

Rather, the Head of Department A suggested that Department B should take on the Lead Agency role with the view that one of Department B's Ministers, the Minister for State/Local Government Relations become Lead Minister for the project. Department

B was prepared to play a crucial role in managing State/Local Government relations for the project but was not prepared to take on the Lead Agency role, arguing that land and property systems development (a major component of the project) was simply not that agency's core business.

In keeping with the "Yes Minister" theme, the Heads of both Departments A and B considered neither could compromise their Ministers by taking responsibility for implementation of a project which was essentially not core business for either department. Being collegiate and eager to solve the dilemma, they argued jointly that Department C should take on the Lead role as it had absorbed various Project Units formerly part of an Administration Agency which had been dissolved during a machinery of government change a year or so earlier.

Department C had to date resisted responsibility for implementation, arguing that implementation of the project definitely did not fall within their Minister's portfolio. As it happened all three departments united to suggest that the Premier's Department take the lead. This was resisted, as implementation needed to take place at the operational level.

Outcomes: Bringing together shared responsibility and accountability

Department C was persuaded by the central agency DPC, to take ownership. There was never formal Ministerial approval as none of the key Ministers, based on advice from their Departments, wanted to take on the lead role. DPC made the argument that Department C, had the skillset, and thus should take the lead role. The assessment process revealed that Department C had:

- Sound project/infrastructure management.
- Experience in managing projects with multiple stakeholders.
- Experience in implementing projects involving both State and Local Government.
- Sound budgeting systems, processes and expertise.

- A willingness to collaborate and work in partnership with stakeholders.
- Education and experience in the technologies related to implementation of a Standard Rural Addressing System; and
- Absorbed various business units from the previous Project Management Department, dissolved earlier as part of a machinery of government change.

Department C's Chief Executive agreed finally to take on the lead role, so long as DPC remained involved and took responsibility for holding the project funds. In other words, if funds fell short, DPC was still involved in ensuring the project was implemented. A letter from the Head of DPC was sent to the Chief Executive thanking him and making the point that he had taken on a leadership role and was more collegial in getting the project up than were others.

DPC held the funds in an allocated fund for the project, as finally agreed by Treasury. Monies were received from departments and re-directed to Department C (on an annual basis). Towards the end of the project the project fund was transferred over to Department C.

The Department took on the role subject to certain conditions

- Establishment of the joint Management Committee (with representation from the three key departments at Chief Executive level or their delegates), as well as representation from local government and DPC.
- The Management Committee was to be responsible and accountable as a whole for overall project outcomes including:
 - Clear responsibility for financial and administrative management of the State government account with delegated accountability for project deliverables to the project manager;
 - Quality project management processes;
 - Simple and effective management and reporting;
 - Whole of State outcomes against individual agency self-interest;

and

- Formal agreements were signed by all the agencies standing to benefit from implementation of the project, committing each department to funding the project over four years.

The project was completed in 2012, as per the revised schedule and within budget.

Observations

At this point we might ask the question: “should implementing a project of this kind be that difficult?” And of course, the simple answer is “No – it should not”.

In the case of implementation of the Rural Addressing Project (South Australia), a great deal of time was lost due to protracted debate as to which department should take responsibility as the lead agency including fund management. Many issues had to be worked through between the different departments and this took time – too much time. There was no mechanism for cross government project outcomes to be measured in a way that makes Chief Executives and their departments accountable for working together in constructive ways to achieve the outcomes sought. This is clearly an area for further development.

As Tony Blair observed, the skill set required now for making the modern state work effectively is different from that needed in the mid-twentieth century. For the modern administration it is much less to do with conventional policy advice and more to do with delivery and project management. This does not mean that decisions should be taken without proper analysis but it does mean that Public Service infrastructure and processes need to change with the times (Blair 2010: 18). It also means that decisions have to be made, positions taken, strategies worked out and communicated at greater speed than in the past (Althaus, Bridgman, and Davis 2007, 19; Blair 2010: 18-19; Stegemann 2010, 13) Unless our Public Service structures are able to

modernise, to become more flexible in delivery, then we will not be able to meet future challenges, and simple tasks like the implementation of a rural addressing scheme will bog us down.

In hindsight, it would appear that had an “off the shelf” model been available which provided at least the basic framework for inter-agency governance arrangements and accountability by several departments, and which offered some flexibility in terms of funding arrangements, the project could have reached roll-out stage much sooner. Such a model would need to cover inter-agency governance arrangements, integrated planning, integrated processes, integrated delivery, flexible funding arrangements, and on-going assessment/evaluation to ensure continuous improvement in outcomes and best practice.

An off the shelf model is not the same as having a central implementation unit. Analyses of implementation units in Australia (Tiernan 2006; Wanna 2006) demonstrate that they do not necessarily expedite implementation. Wanna (2006: 354) describes how the Commonwealth implementation unit established by the Howard government was to focus on a holistic view of strategic policy delivery. It was never sufficiently resourced and was more a tracking unit than one scrutinizing implementation (p. 365). In her analysis of the implementation unit established in Queensland during the Beattie government Tiernan outlines how it was established in response to significant service delivery failure, but in the end the implementation unit did not do implementation. Not only was it poorly resourced, but the head of the Premier’s Department promised a “light touch” (Tiernan 2006: 380), and the tasks were codified as agenda setting, clarifying expectations, monitoring performance and implementation and reporting to Cabinet. Tiernan points out (2006: 374) that it was difficult to sustain the Premier’s interest in policy and administration.

When critics asked, in the South Australian rural addressing case why the Premier was not asked to intervene and make it happen, the same point could be made. As far as the Premier was concerned the decision was made, it was up to the well paid public servants to make something simple happen. He did not need to concern himself with administrative detail. From the analysis of implementation units in

Australia and in similar overseas jurisdictions (Lindquist 2006) it is clear that an implementation unit at the centre is not a magic bullet for swift and seamless implementation. There is however an argument for an off-the-shelf model but with leadership to overcome inertia, bureaucratic wrangling and lack of ownership.

It is often assumed that central agencies can wield a big implementation stick. Central agencies are both required and able to see the big picture, to rise above the constraints of agency boundaries and pursue a whole of government agenda. One would expect that the quality of leadership demonstrated by central agencies would always achieve results, but there are times when a heavy hand gets results – rough justice which involves treading on toes. This was not the case here. In an analysis of whether the South Australian Cabinet Office persuaded or used a big stick, the observation was that there were few examples of Cabinet Office treading on toes (Graycar 2007). There's a bit of persuasion, a bit of huffing and puffing, but not a lot of opportunity for brute force. On the big policy issues there is no real alternative to quality leadership, big picture knowledge, and use of whole of government positioning.

Critical Success factors

In the Rural Addressing Project we were able to identify critical success factors, and at the same time identify the barriers to those success factors

Leadership

The project needed a champion. The central agency could only take it so far, and had to find a leader willing to run with it, who would then delegate responsibility to a reliable and committed senior officer. The qualities sought were the standards found in the management literature, Leadership, Vision, Teamwork, Good working relationships across tiers of government, Expertise, Continuity, Resilience and persistence, Implementation Planning

Governance

The establishment of a Management Committee, akin to a Board of Management (Australian National Audit Office 2006: 59-60) was established to ensure sound strategic and financial outcomes for the project.

Membership at senior level was crucial in keeping the Project on track and delivered on time and within budget. Membership was made up as follows:

- Chair (Chief Executive, Lead Agency or senior delegate, reporting to the Lead Minister)
- DPC representative to oversee state objectives
- Representation at Chief Executive level (or delegate) from other key departments (jointly responsible for implementation)
- Surveyor General (Land Services Group Project Management responsibilities)
- Local Government representative - representing Councils' responsibilities
- Principal users (SAFECOM representative – CE ,CFS and Emergency Services).

The Management Committee met quarterly to review the progress of implementation with an annual report (including any major milestones) to the lead Minister.

Delegated accountability for day-to-day State Government deliverables was assigned to the Project Manager, directly accountable to the Management Committee. The Project Manager was responsible for producing a detailed Business Case and Implementation Plan.

Flexible Funding Arrangements

Funding for this project essentially came about through protracted negotiations across the relevant departments. The experience suggests that consideration needs to be given by Treasuries to flexible funding arrangements for projects of this nature. That is projects which cut across the system and where ownership cannot be delegated to one department (Graycar 2006).

Identifying the barriers to the critical success factors is an important process of planning an implementation strategy

In this case they can be summarised as follows

Critical Success Factors	Critical Barriers
Leadership and champion for project	<p>Initial lack of leadership – taken over by DPC as a default.</p> <p>Ongoing leadership issues ie: in relation to departments resisting ownership and role of lead agency.</p>
Governance – development of Management Committee, led initially by central agency (with clout) and later by line agency (with skill set).	<p>The project had stumbled in its early days due to lack of formal governance arrangements.</p> <p>Between 2003 and 2006 there had been a high level Executive Team led by a department that was later abolished in a machinery of government change</p>
Flexible Funding Arrangements - Consideration by central agencies/ Treasuries needs to be given to flexible funding arrangements for projects such as this	Lack of flexibility of funding, limits on available funds within agencies, and fear that their exposure could be increased if things went wrong. No mechanisms for pooled funding.

Moving forward

Implementation of the Rural Addressing Project (South Australia) is just one example of the complexities and difficulties faced by central agencies in co-ordinating implementation of short-term projects where responsibility and ownership is spread between departments. The lack of collaboration at departmental level saw the key departments approach the project with a “silo” mentality.

The tyranny of small decisions means that projects like rural addressing often fall between implementation cracks.

We referred above to off the shelf models, and fleshing out such a model could see implementation in terms of short term projects owned by clusters of key departments as a corporate entity. This would essentially elevate ownership. There would be project sponsorship and accountability by Chief Executives (including their senior executive teams) and development of one-off implementation committees to take joint responsibility for project implementation, with delegated accountability for day-to-day management of government deliverables to professional Project Managers/ Teams.

This could be built on research which strives to link or integrate theory with practice, and action learning which could feed into a two-way process between departments and the centre (Premier's Departments and Treasuries) in terms of informing on-going policy development, strategic planning and flexible funding options.

Ideally Departments would commit to funding for across government initiatives confirmed and agreed at the outset, with templates for agreements between parties concerned. While such agreements might not be legally enforceable, they serve a purpose in terms of decisions arrived at and commitments made, which outlive changes in staffing arrangements/ senior executive appointments and organisational change.

The pace of modern politics and the intrusion of media scrutiny change implementation dynamics. The new media, digital media, social media, networked communities all form part of an historic shift in the capacity of citizens to speak and

to know and to hold governments accountable. This puts our public services into an unenviable situation if they have difficulty with small decisions and approach each issue as if there were no previous experience on its solution. Governments and central agencies continue to look at new and innovative ways of devolving decision-making, with the view to improving performance management across systems with the objective of delivering better public services to the community

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